

Focus On 4

District 4 updates from City Councilman Richard Perez

July 2004 • Volume 1, Issue 1

Dear District 4 Neighbor,

Greetings! It has been more than one year since you elected me to the San Antonio District 4 City Council District seat as your representative. I am honored that you placed your trust in me! The responsibility is one I take very seriously. My mission is, and will always be, to do what is right for District 4 and for the entire city. My constant challenge is to balance my City Council duties with my business and family life.

Every day I am faced with important decisions that must be made on issues that profoundly impact our city. Through it all, I have remained focused on the issues that are most critical to our district.

Nutrition programs for seniors; sales and property taxes; code enforcement; weekly analysis of the City Council Meeting agenda in order to be able to make informed policy decisions; development in and around the Toyota site; a projected city budget deficit of approximately \$21 million; and numerous graffiti and environmental cleanups are a small sampling of the myriad of issues in which I am involved.

The issue that seems to rise above them all is the need for improvements to our streets, sidewalks and drainage systems.

To that end, I have worked closely with our Public Works department to identify streets in need of repair under the 2004 Street Maintenance Program. The city will allocate approximately \$2 million for street improvements in each of the 10 Council districts in 2004. To date, nearly all (79%) of the street maintenance projects in District 4 have been completed.

The city annually evaluates streets and places them on future schedules according to the level of need. If anyone would like to suggest a street for repair, please call my office.

I have also made it a priority to ensure that areas very close to elementary schools, within a two-block radius to be specific, are equipped with adequate sidewalks to ensure the safety of our



children. Construction generally costs hundreds of thousands of dollars, depending on the number of blocks the sidewalks will span. I am studying the areas near elementary schools in the district to determine where the greatest need is for sidewalk construction.

Aside from improving our streets, sidewalks and drainage systems, I have also become interested in many different issues that you have told me are important to you.

For instance, I have held more than 15 graffiti and neighborhood cleanups because you feel so strongly about cleaning up your

neighborhood and keeping them clean. I have worked with several city departments—SAPD, the city attorney's office, and Public Works, for example—to learn more about the graffiti problem and ways to combat it. Surprisingly, our state and local laws provide relatively strong penalties for this crime. However, the problem has been catching those who are committing the crime. I urge people to call 911 if they see a graffiti act in progress. Further, if there is graffiti on city property, such as at a park, in drainage ditches, or on stop signs, call

311 to report the problem, and the city will clean it up.

I encourage people to be proactive and join me in taking a stand against graffiti in our neighborhoods. We can make great strides in getting rid of graffiti if we work together to combat it.

There are many other important matters affecting District 4. In the coming months, I hope to offer you more information about those issues. I truly believe our relationship is a partnership. With more than 100,000 partners, this job will always have its challenges. But in the end, I believe only good can come of collective involvement and input. Please let me hear from you.

Yours in Service,



The Councilman initiated two mural projects in the district to combat graffiti. The murals were completed by McCollum HS students and Rayburn MS students. The drawing above was the concept design for the mural at 260 Tarasco created by the Rayburn students. See Page 2.

How to Reach Councilman Perez ...

City Hall Office

100 Military Plaza, 2nd Floor

(210) 207-7281 Fax: (210) 207-7027

Staff: Deborah Hosey, Rose Ann Sanchez, Lauren Dunn

Email: cadist4@sanantonio.gov or district4@sanantonio.gov

District Office

333 Valley Hi Drive, Suite 2110

(210) 678-0044 Fax: (210) 678-0099

Staff: Gloria Rodriguez, Thomas Guevara

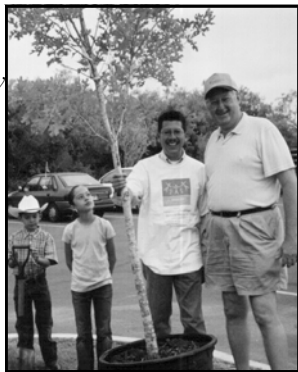
Email: dist4field@sanantonio.gov

Councilman, volunteers 'making over' community through cleanups



Volunteers from City Year, a public service group, helped clean up an elderly resident's home on Fenfield. They also picked up litter on the median between Middlefield and Medina Base Road.

The Springvale Neighborhood Association planted trees—donated by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans—at Medina Base Park. Pictured are the Councilman, Bill Dorey, and the Councilman's children Richie and Elissa, who volunteered their Saturday morning to help plant the trees.



Rayburn Middle School students received recognition from Councilman Perez for creation of a mural at 260 Tarasco (right).



The PACE neighborhood group adopted Medina Base Road as part of the "Adopt-a-Spot" litter control project (far right). Shown are Keep San Antonio Beautiful President Bud Little, PACE President Jim Myers, Councilman Perez, and Public Works Director Tom Wendorf.

residents with disposal of garbage and brush, house painting and other general maintenance tasks.

The Councilman appreciates the neighborhood groups, students, nonprofits, volunteers, and the Office of Cultural Affairs, which have all contributed greatly to these projects. *If anyone is interested in serving as a volunteer, please call Councilman Perez' office at 678-0044.*



Councilman Perez teamed up with students from South San Antonio High School's Interact Club to paint over graffiti along Gillette Blvd.



District 4 Neighborhood Associations

<u>Group</u>	<u>Meeting Day</u>
Adams Hill	1 st Thursday of month
Adams Hill C.O.P.	1 st Monday of month
Heritage	1 st Wednesday of month
Indian Creek	As needed
Lago Vista	Annual Meeting
Lackland Terrace	3 rd Monday of month
PACE	Last Thursday of month
Patton Heights	As needed

<u>Group</u>	<u>Meeting Day</u>
Quintana	2 nd Tuesday of month
Rainbow Hills	First Tuesday of month
Southwest Community Ass'n	4 th Monday of month
Springvale	Last Tuesday of month
Stablewood Farms	As needed
Valley Forest	3 rd Tuesday of month
Valley-Hi North	2 nd Monday of month

A message from the Councilman on Proposition 13

The City Council has an unwavering commitment to ensuring the welfare of all of our seniors, particularly those on fixed incomes who are most in need. To that end, we as a City Council have taken a variety of actions including expanding our senior nutrition programs; moving forward with a pilot prescription drug payment assistance program; and committing \$2.5 million to the creation of a Senior Multi-Services/Health Center designed to bring together the multitude of senior services offered by the City, County and other not-for-profit service providers under one roof.

There has been much talk about the potential impact of Proposition 13 on our seniors. The fervor has led to discussions in the City Council about taking Proposition 13 to the voters in November. I have thus made it my business to understand Proposition 13 and its actual impact on those it was meant to help. Because of the complexity of the constitutional amendment, I would like to take a few moments to examine this proposition more closely, in order to make sure you have the correct information. Further, I would like to inform you about the property tax exemptions the City currently offers its senior and disabled veteran homeowners in order to demonstrate the City's proactive commitment to providing property tax relief to seniors.

About Proposition 13

Proposition 13 gives cities the authority to **permanently cap the City's portion** of the property tax levy paid on a homestead residence once a homeowner is disabled or has qualified for a senior citizen exemption (reaches the age of 65). The levy is the amount of taxes that are actually paid on the homestead. I highlighted above the words **City's portion**, because the City's portion would be the only part of an individual's property tax bill that would be frozen. This means that if a resident currently pays \$657.00 to the City on their property tax bill, that amount would be frozen and they would continue to pay that amount until death. While there would be no actual reduction in taxes, supporters of this proposition say the "relief" would be in the form of foreseeing the exact amount of taxes owed to the particular taxing unit, in this case the city.

As you know, the City's levy is only one component of an individual's property tax bill. Consequently, I believe it important to take a moment to analyze the **average** San Antonio homeowner's property tax bill in order to get a clear understanding of the dollars involved and where they go. The box above illustrates the average San Antonio property tax bill.

As you can see, on average 79% of a homeowner's property taxes is not paid to the city, but instead goes to other taxing entities in Bexar County, with the bulk of property taxes going to the school district.

Savings Currently Offered by the City

In an effort to assist seniors with their property tax burden, the City offers those seniors who are 65 years of age or older an exemption of **\$65,000 off the value** of their homestead on their annual property tax bill, up from \$60,000 last year.

This exemption is by far the greatest exemption that is offered to seniors by any taxing entity in Bexar County, and the highest exemption offered by any large city in Texas. Additionally, the City provides property tax relief to disabled veterans who are over 65 years of age, up to \$12,000.

This year the exemption will be used by 68,424 senior homeowners in San Antonio. **Of these, 36,963 or 54% will pay zero property taxes to the City.** Based on the values of the homes of those 68,424 individuals, the City will exempt \$3.661 billion in taxable value, equating to an exemption of \$13.4 million in General Fund dollars and \$7.7 million in Debt Service dollars in this current 2004 Fiscal Year. Over 17,300 disabled veteran homeowners receive exemptions ranging from \$5,000 for persons with a 20% disability to \$12,000

for persons with a 100% disability.

I recently received a call from a senior who said he wanted property tax relief in the form of implementing Proposition 13. I took the liberty of researching his specific address, and we were surprised by what I found. The total appraised value of his home is \$64,800. This appraisal has been the same since 2002. Since this year's over 65 exemption is \$65,000, he **will not pay any property tax to the City this year**. He also qualifies for and has registered for the Disabled Veteran exemption of \$12,000 that the City offers. His total property tax relief from the City of San Antonio is \$77,000. The value of his home would need to surpass \$77,000 before he would need to pay one cent in City property taxes. He will however need to pay \$320.66 to the other taxing entities that make up his property tax bill this year. A City property freeze will consequently have no effect on his property tax bill whatsoever. In fact, 29 of the 30 residents who have called my office do not pay any city taxes as a result of the senior citizen exemption offered by the city.

Fiscal Impact

Staff has conducted a preliminary analysis of the fiscal impact of a property tax freeze for disabled homeowners and for senior homeowners. Such a freeze would mean a loss of \$36.7 million in property taxes over the next 10 years or \$3.6 million this fiscal year. This is a very preliminary estimate given by the City Manager's office in response to questions from the City Council.

AVERAGE SAN ANTONIO PROPERTY TAX BILL

Taxing Unit	% of Total Tax Bill
1. School District	53.14%
*2. City of San Antonio	21.26%
3. Bexar County	11.67%
4. University Health System	8.90%
5. Alamo Community College District	3.84%
6. San Antonio River Authority	.60%
7. Bexar County Road & Flood	.57%

**Under Proposition 13, the city has the authority to freeze only its share of property taxes.*

Believing that youth indeed hold the key to our city's future, Councilman Perez has visited various schools and libraries to motivate students and encourage their continued education. He has visited 10 schools in and around the district.



Councilman Perez speaks to a class at a local elementary school as part of Hispanic Heritage Month.

Councilman Perez reads to a sharp youngster at Johnston Public Library, as part of SBC's "Connecting Kids" Library Read-A-Thon.



Senior Nutrition Program

The Comprehensive Senior Nutrition program provides elderly persons, 60 years and older, and spouses, with a nutritionally balanced noon meal in a congregate setting with supportive services consisting of:

**Outreach activities
Health Screenings
Transportation
Health & Welfare Counseling
Nutrition Education**

The program operates Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Services are offered free of charge. The following are senior nutrition program sites located in District 4:

Our Lady of Angels Church	South San Civic Center
Phone: 923-6270	Phone: 924-4691
1212 Stonewall (78211)	503 Lovett (78211)
St. Bonaventure Church	St. Vincent De Paul
Phone: 923-0899	Phone: 670-1800
1918 Palo Alto (78211)	4222 SW Loop 410 (78227)

(Continued from Page 3) Proposition 13 must be carefully examined

Whatever the amount may be, it would need to be made up through another revenue source, or City services would need to be cut in a very substantial way.

In addition to the financial impact of Proposition 13, I am also concerned about its lack of flexibility. As mentioned above, once a community enacted Proposition 13, it could **never** be repealed. As your elected representative charged with ensuring the long-term fiscal well-being of our City, I have some concerns with the lack of flexibility in the structure of such a far-reaching action.

Further, a policy making body such as the City Council could not take into account a household's ability to pay (i.e. household income) when formulating a freeze policy. It is an all or nothing policy. Thus, whether a home is valued at \$50,000 or \$500,000, the freeze would apply to the value of both homes equally. I believe property tax breaks should be based on the ability to pay. Income and wealth do not automatically diminish with age. Other homeowners, such as young couples and single parents also struggle with property taxes but do not receive special exemptions and have not had as much time to increase their earning capacity or savings.

Finally, what further complicates this issue, at least in my mind, is what is going on in Austin in relation to the revamping of our school financing system with the special called sessions of the Texas Legislature. Limiting a City's ability to set its own property tax and sales tax rates has been mentioned as a possible "solution" to the school funding issue facing our State. This is significant given that the amount of property taxes and sales taxes collected annually by the City produce almost 48% of the dollars that go toward funding the City's largest fund, the General Fund. This fund includes the "bread and butter" city services that we all come to expect from our City such as:

- Police
- Fire
- Public Works (Street Maintenance)
- Parks and Recreation
- Library
- Health Department
- Code Compliance

A cut in the city's ability to collect property or sales taxes would have a devastating effect on our provision of basic city services.

In short, I hope that you can see I am not taking Proposition 13 lightly but rather am being cautious given the impact it would have on our City. The largest City in Texas to institute Proposition 13 is Pasadena, with a population of 141,674. No major Texas City has instituted the freeze, as they too are assessing the impact such a move would have on their individual communities.

Based on the information at hand, if we instituted a property tax freeze, major cuts to City services would need to be undertaken. If we were to institute the property tax freeze and wanted to keep the same level of city services, the property tax rate for people under age 65 would need to be raised, placing a greater tax burden on homeowners younger than 65. The only other scenario that comes to mind would be to reduce the current \$65,000 exemption for homeowners over age 65 in order to compensate for the projected \$3.6 million loss in property tax revenues, resulting in a zero sum gain to our seniors. Even so, we as a City Council have begun preliminary discussions about placing the tax freeze issue on the upcoming ballot for voter approval.

Based on the above information, I hope you agree that education is important in order to understand such a far-reaching and complex issue. Please let me know what your thoughts are on Proposition 13.

Businesses, volunteers and Councilman help senior citizens in need



Shown above with Councilman Perez, Raul Gomez talks with the Councilman about progress being made on his father's home on Fenfield, which was damaged in a fire last winter. Shown are business owners Rick Reed and Richard Reyes, who volunteered to rebuild the home (right).

Businesses and volunteers finished rebuilding the home of seventy-five-year-old Berta Alvarado, on Briggs (far right). Alvarado's home was severely damaged in a fire on Thanksgiving Day 2002.



repair of Gomez' home, as well as refrigerators for the two seniors.

But the biggest surprise came when Councilman Perez encountered three businesses who dug deep within their pocketbooks and hearts to donate materials and manpower to repair and refurbish the homes. **Davila Electric, Carpentry Concepts, and RY DAN Group** collectively donated about \$25,000 in labor and materials for both homes.

Councilman Perez appreciates the businesses, employees, nonprofit groups and volunteers who have lent a hand to help their neighbors in need.



Speed humps to be installed at more than 40 approved locations

Drivers will soon have to slow down in neighborhoods across District 4, as speed humps will be installed at more than 40 locations throughout the district in order to curb speeding and improve safety in our neighborhoods.

When Councilman Perez began his term in June 2003, thirty-five areas in the district had been considered eligible for speed humps.

However, the speed humps had not yet been installed because of a lack of funding. Some areas had been on hold for several years.

So Councilman Perez included in the 2003 bond issue that was approved by voters, \$534,000 for the installation of speed humps throughout his district. The speed humps listed below will be installed at the approved locations by the end of this year.



78242

Apple Valley (Palm Valley to Walnut Valley)
Elm Valley (Apple Valley to Walnut Valley)
Five Palms (Buckhorn to Century)
Five Palms (Elk Runner to Rain Dance)
Five Palms (Running to Old Pearsall Road)
Hayden (Pearsall to Clegg)
Mill Valley (Lark Valley to Pine Valley)
Seacomber (Royal Gate to Amberwood)

78245

Dugas (Aztec to Cedarbend)
Ellison Dr S (Cedar Bend to Potranco)
Heritage Farm (Ellison to Saddle Brook)
Wilsons Creek (Five Forks to Adams Hill)

78221

Grosvenor (Nock to Tacoma)
Pyron (IH 35 to Commercial)
Pyron W (Halsey to Commercial)
Rayburn (Escalon to Tacoma)
Rayburn (Logwood to Escalon)

78224

Lytle (Gillette to Villaret)
Mc Cauley (Ascot to IH 35)
Ozalid (Gillette to Tortuga)

78227

Chaps (Spur to Gunsmoke)
Harness (Remuda/Quirt to Westshire)
Springvale (Gage to Dumont)
Spur (Stagecoach to West Rock)
Westshire (Harness to Roan)
Zabra (Horal to Tomar)

78211

Aragon (Palo Alto to Questa)
Briggs (New Laredo Hwy to Yvonne)
Fairmeadows (Prairie Hill to Hunters Creek)
Fitch (Lardner to Zarzamora)
Golden (Ampola to Somerset)
Mc Arthur (Nimitz to Somerset)
Peabody (Rankin to Somerset)
Pitluk (Albren to Mesa)
Pyron W (Huron to IH 35)
Pyron W (Packard to Huron)
Pyron W (Zarzamora to Wabash)
Stonewall (Commercial to Orey)
Vincent (McNair to Lasswell)
Wainwright (Palo Alto to Lasswell)
Whitman (Ella to Oconee)
Whitman (Ella to Packard)
Whitman (Gerald to Oconee)

Bookstore opens with jubilant celebration

“Waldenbooks is performing well and hopes to continue to see shoppers visiting their store. They have exceeded their hopes with opening numbers,” South Park Mall Marketing Manager Beth Riebschlager said.

Waldenbooks opened a 3,000 square foot bookstore at South Park Mall June 23 after six years of organized activity by Books in the Barrio, a group founded by South San High School students.

Other groups that joined the charge for the bookstore included the South Side Chamber of Commerce, Congressman Ciro Rodriguez and Councilman Perez, who initiated a City Council resolution in October 2003 that supported the creation of a Southside bookstore.

Waldenbooks is the first major retail bookstore to be located south of U.S. Highway 90.

The store features more than 20,000

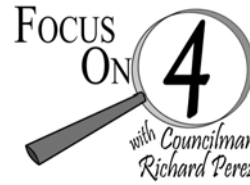


Councilman Perez speaks to a crowd of more than 150 people at the grand opening of Waldenbooks at South Park Mall June 23.

books and magazines along with a Spanish-language section.

Waldenbooks is located in the Foley's wing of South Park Mall between Verizon Wireless and Allure Hair Designs.

Councilman Perez urges residents to show their support for the bookstore to ensure its continued success.



Find out what is going on in District 4 by watching “Focus on Four,” a program highlighting District 4 residents and activities, on Channel 21 on Time Warner Cable. You can also watch the City Council meetings **LIVE** each Thursday beginning at 1 p.m. The meetings are replayed Friday at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday at 1 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Call 311 for City Services

311 is a simple, easy-to-remember telephone number that helps residents with City service requests such as reporting potholes, stray animals, missing street signs, issues with trash collection or requests for general City information ...CALL 311!

Focus On 4

**District 4 updates from
City Councilman Richard Perez**

Richard Perez
City Councilman
Council District 4
P.O. Box 839966
San Antonio, Texas 78283-3966